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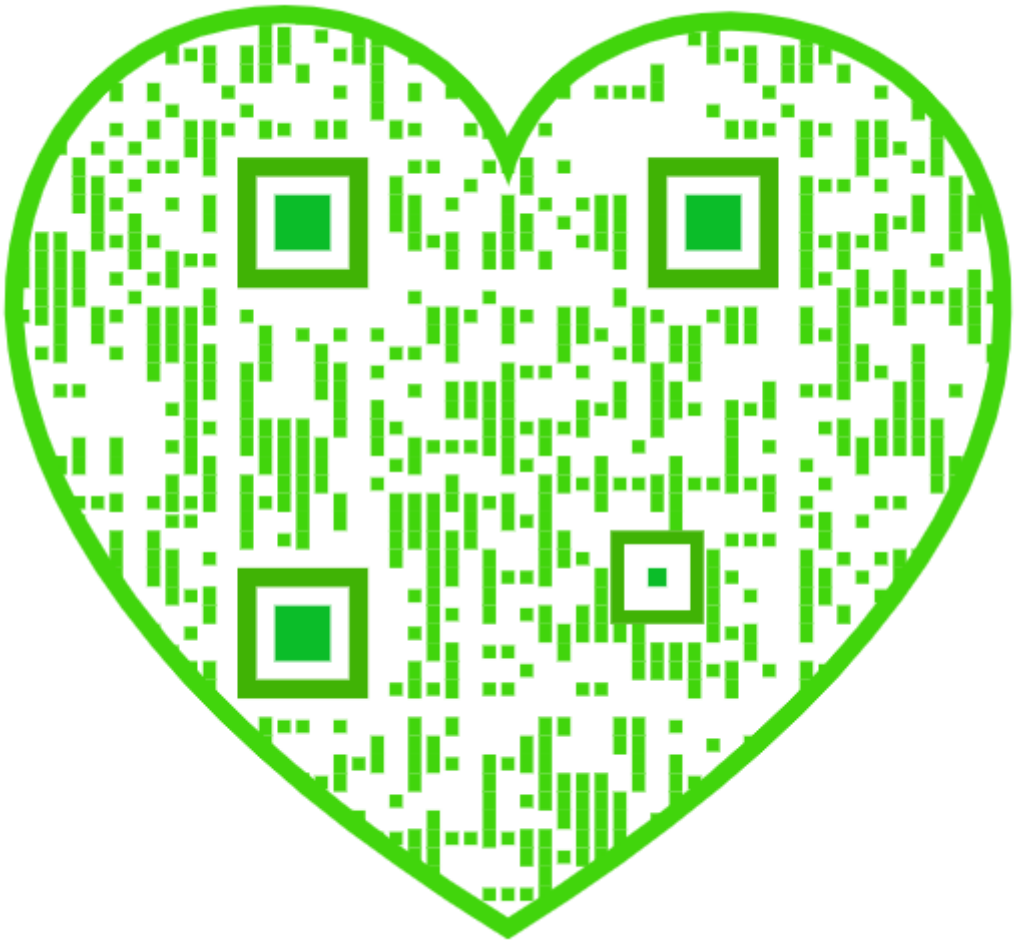
A RENASCENCE OF THE IRISH ART OF LACE-MAKING



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A RENASCENCE

OF

THE IRISH ART OF LACE-MAKING

A RENASCENCE

OF

THE IRISH ART

OF

LACE-MAKING.

Illustrated by Photographic Reproductions of Irish Laces, made from new and specially designed Patterns.

INTRODUCTORY NOTES AND DESCRIPTIONS

BY

A. S. C.

[Cole, Alan Sumerly]

LONDON: CHAPMAN AND HALL,

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1888.

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CRYSTAL PALACE PRESS

A RENASCENCE OF

THE IRISH ART OF LACE-MAKING.

In the early days of the art of lace-making, before floating flounces, falling lappets, etc., were invented, when stiff lace borders and insertions were worn as much by men as by women, books of patterns, mostly of a formal and geometric character, were published in Venice, Rome, Antwerp, Cologne, and Paris, and were dedicated, in high-flown phrases, to the "profit and contentment of beautiful and skilful ladies." This was in the sixteenth century. But soon afterwards the art of lace-making gave birth to lighter and more varied expressions. These exacted an application and assiduity impossible for those whose taste and pleasure led them to adorn themselves with, rather than to take part in making, fairylike tissues, the production of which accordingly devolved upon peasant women, girls, and conventual

communities, etc. Under the patronage of wealthy persons, gifted with intelligence in defining their wants, an artistic industry grew up; and in some countries, during the seventeenth century, sympathy with industrial prosperity and development prompted Ministers of State to organise work-centres of lace-makers, and to bring them under the direct influence of distinguished artists, who designed patterns for them. In other countries, it was frequently the kindly disposed lady of the village or parish who would do what she could to encourage peasant women in their endeavours to earn a modest livelihood with their needles, or with their pillows and bobbins. Traders bought and sold the results of the industry, and sometimes lace-makers reaped a good harvest; whilst at others, when repetitions of the same shapes and patterns had satisfied passing demand, the workers would be at their wits' ends for the want of the bare necessities of life. Artistic direction, either by fashionable lace-wearers or clever men of trade, at such time was virtually unknown in England and Ireland. Abroad, in France, the leadership of artistic design is thoroughly understood as of first importance to the successful employment of skilful labour, which by itself is only wasted energy.

In spite of a want of artistic direction, geographical circumstances seem to have been determining factors in the survival of lace-making in Ireland, more so perhaps than in England; and it comes to pass in these days, when perception of the beautiful and dainty might be wider spread than formerly, that Irish lace-making has somehow pressed itself upon public consideration as being a home or cottage industry, in favour of which it is worth while to apply available resources to a development of fine style in its productions.

It is foreign to the purpose of what may be held to be a nineteenth century "Pattern Book" to attempt a history of the rise, progress, and fluctuations of lace-making in Ireland. No special pleading is necessary on behalf of the industry. Its newest productions have inherent vitality to arrest the notice of artistic amateurs of graceful accessories of costume.

A potent influence for good may be wielded by fashion. With many, however, fashion is a sort of blind fetichism—a habit in fact with a number of people of accepting as a standard, something used or proposed for use by a recognised or self-asserted authority. Submissiveness to such a habit undoubtedly tends to frustrate the exercise of personal

and independent taste, which is dormant in most people. And yet the life of an artistic industry like lace-making by hand greatly depends upon the influence of cultured individuals, notwithstanding the spasmodic impulses which whim and fickle fashion may give it. It may be well enough to call into employment a number of lace-makers, all producing things much alike, somewhat after the manner of machines; but it is better for refined and independent requirements to instigate the making of artistic laces, each of particular beauty and distinction, and so lead the way. If lace-wearers of to-day were to take a hint from those of two hundred years ago, they would display an intelligence beyond the reach of mere empiricism. Modern taste for, and knowledge of, hand-made laces hardly exist; their place is speciously occupied by something which poses for them—a flippant frothiness of fancy, evoked by miles upon miles of machine weavings called lace, totally different in nature and structure from hand-made laces.

How many are there who can scheme in their minds' eyes the beautiful effects of flowing forms, contrasts of dainty ornamental devices, varieties of textures marvellous as cobwebs, and compositions full of surprises and pleasures, which may be wrought

in different sorts of lace, and then take the pains to get their schemes realised? How many are there who shun the excellent diversion and improvement to be enjoyed by learning how to have taste, and how to value productions of artistic craft? How many, indeed, are there not who, under pressure of haste to possess, content themselves with being mindless shapes, to be pranked out according to the draconic laws of the fashion-monger? All of which questions or riddles will have little or no concern for those who take pleasure in seeing what may be achieved by combining art in designs with skill in making laces from them. This is suggestively set forth in this little record of a "Renascence in Irish Lace-making." Enough, perhaps, is given in the following illustrations to show that the Emerald Isle of the United Kingdom can revive, in modern expressions, glories of historic Venetian Points, Italian Cut Works, and Points of Alençon and Argentan.

There are seven different sorts of Irish lace-work, which may be briefly named as follows:

1. Flat Needlepoint Lace.
2. Raised Needlepoint Lace.
3. Embroidery on Net, either of darning or chain-stitch.

4. Cut Cambric or Linen-work, for patterns in the style of *guipure* and *applique* Laces.
5. Drawn Thread-work in the style of Reticella and Italian Cut Points.
6. Pillow Lace, in imitation of Devonshire Lace.
7. Crochet.

The products of these different classes of work may be used for articles of costume, trimmings, flounces, handkerchiefs, etc., and for furniture purposes—cushion-covers, doyleys, quilts, etc.

Special designs for all sorts of things to be wrought in lace have been produced under the auspices of a Committee formed in 1884; and the illustrations now presented are of a few of the specimens worked from designs belonging to this Committee.

A considerable number of other specimens besides those here shown have been worked from new patterns, and repetitions of them can be produced. Any one desiring to ascertain particulars as to their cost, etc., may obtain the required information by applying direct to the different lace-making centres and convents named.

Further than this, it may be well to say that designs for laces are made at the Crawford Municipal School of Art, Cork, and at some of its branches in Co. Kerry and Co. Cork; also at the School of Art, Waterford, and at the Metropolitan School of Art, Dublin. But in ordering a design, the kind of ornamentation wanted should be stated, as well as the class of lace-work in which the design is to be carried out.

A. S. C.

May, 1888.

No. 1.

PLASTRON AND COLLAR FOR A DRESS.

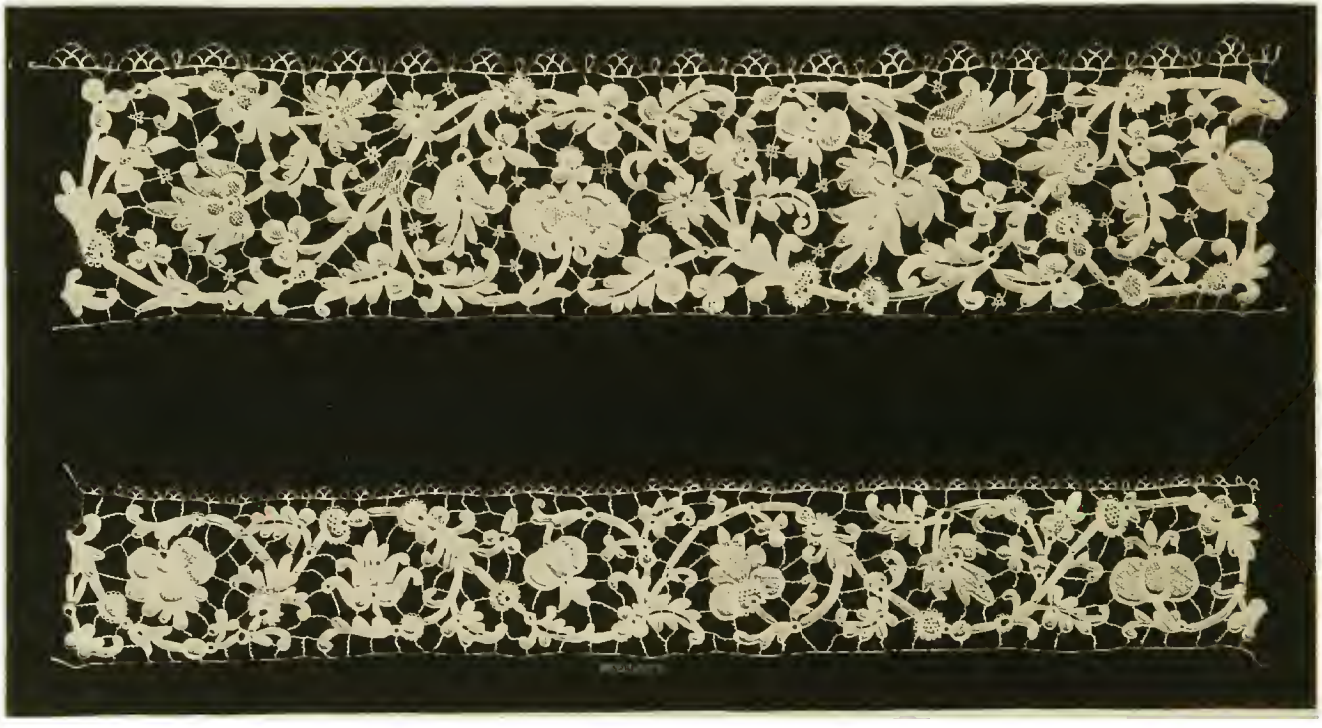
These are needlepoint laces worked by lace-makers under the supervision of the nuns of the Convent of Poor Clares, Kenmare, Co. Kerry. The pattern was designed by one of the nuns.

The style of the lace, with its varied and minute fillings and its gentle accentuations worked in relief, is suggestive of a variation in needlepoint lace-making which was developed in France during the latter part of the seventeenth century, when the Royal Manufactory of hand-made laces had been established by Louis XIV. at the suggestion of his Minister, Colbert.

No. 2.

BORDERS OF RAISED NEEDLEPOINT LACE.

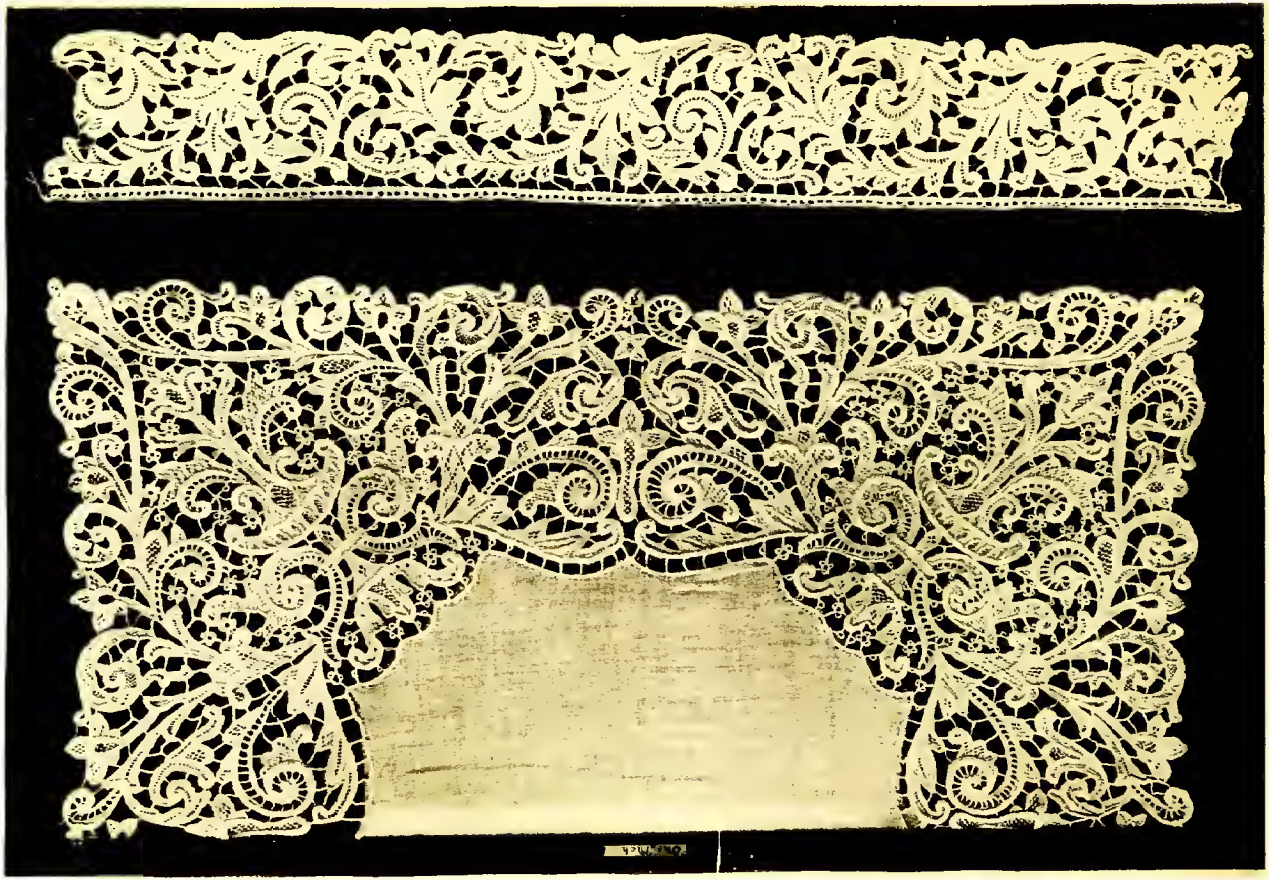
The style of this needlepoint lace is based upon that of the Venetian lace (sometimes called Rose Point) of the seventeenth century. The designs for these two borders were made at the Crawford Municipal School of Art, Cork, by Miss Perry, and were then worked in the North of Ireland, at Innismacsaint, by needlepoint lace-makers employed by Mr. Ben Lindsey, the well-known lace-dealer of Grafton Street, Dublin.



No. 3.

POCKET-HANDKERCHIEF AND BORDER.

Like No. 2, the style of this lace is adopted from Venetian needlepoint lace of the seventeenth century. The designs were made by Mr. S. J. Murphy, of the School of Art at Waterford, and were worked into lace by workers under the supervision of the nuns of the Carmelite Convent, New Ross, Co. Wexford.

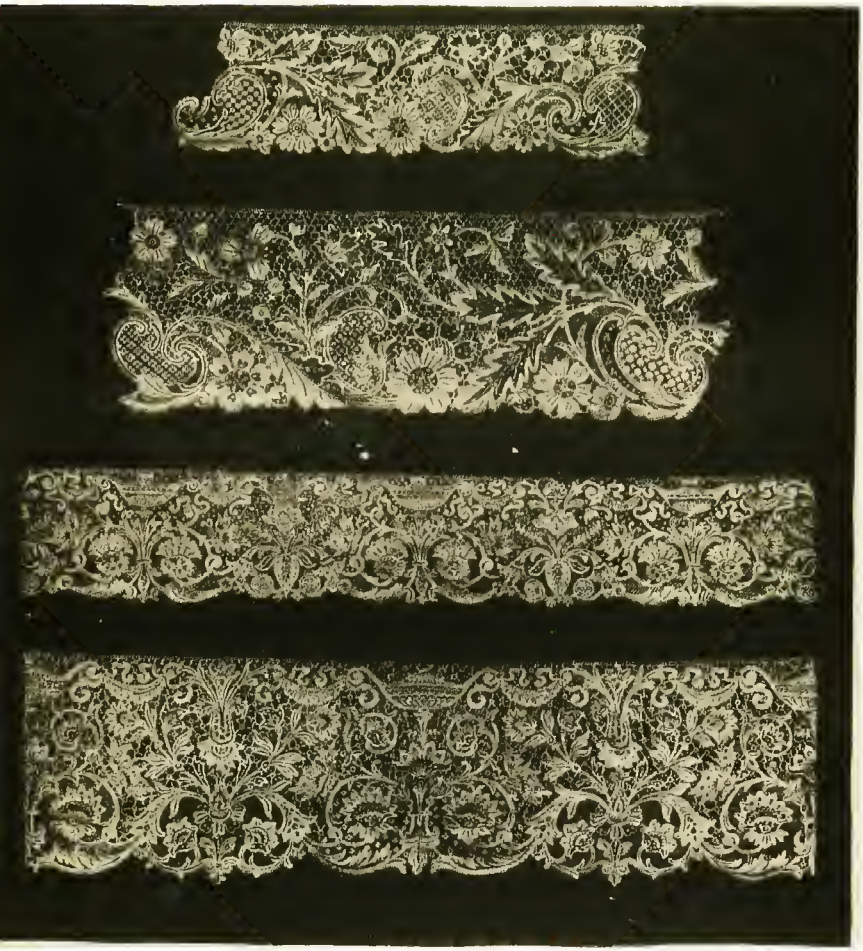


No. 4.

BORDERS FOR TRIMMING DRESSES.

The extremely delicate texture of the third specimen in this plate is remarkable. The laces are all of needlepoint lace; but in this third specimen we have certainly more than a mere revival of the filmy needlepoint laces, made at Venice and Brussels towards the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth centuries. All these specimens were worked by needlepoint lace-makers under the supervision of the nuns of the Presentation Convent at Youghal, Co. Cork.

The designs for the two upper borders, in which the celebrated ground *à brides picotées* plays an important part, were made by Miss Julyan, of the Metropolitan School of Art, Dublin; those for the two lower ones were made by Mr. Michael Hayes, of Limerick and London.

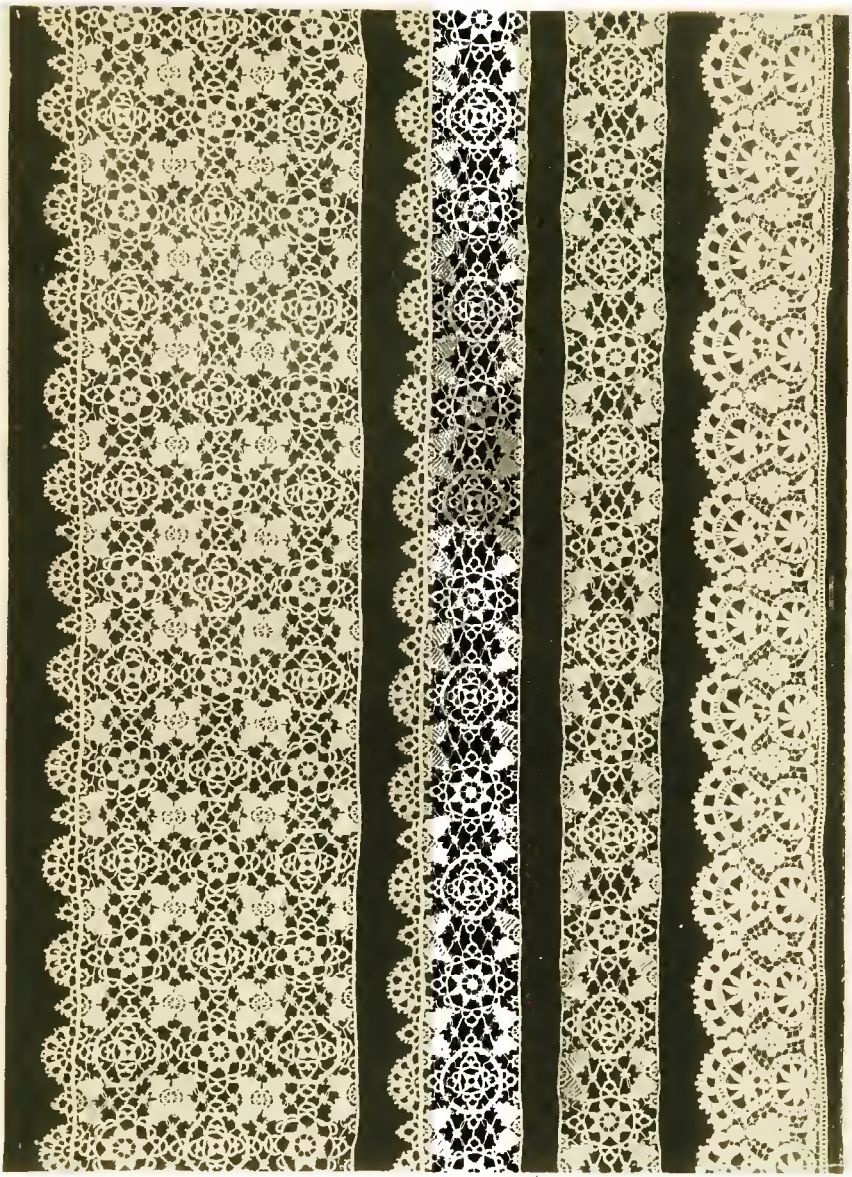


No. 5.

CROCHET BORDERS.

Crochet lace is one of the more easily made of Irish laces. Its scope of effect is somewhat limited, as the nature of the process does not lend itself to the production of dainty forms, such as those to be found in the preceding plates. Crochet lace, nevertheless, possesses a special *cachet*, and is capable of considerable variety of effect. Patterns, like those shown, composed of simple geometric forms repeated in an ordered manner, are possibly the more successful. Much Irish crochet goes abroad. In Paris it generally passes under the name of *Point d'Irlande*. As a rule the better classes of Irish crochet lace are not known in England at all. Indeed, unless fashion somehow favours the adoption in England of *Point d'Irlande*, as something quite new from Paris, we in England shall probably have no reason to think anything of it.

The specimens here shown were produced by workers at Cork, under the supervision of Mr. Michael Holland (Messrs. Dwyer & Co., Cork).



No. 6.

CARRICKMACROSS *APPLIQUE* LACE.

This flounce and border to match, of cut cambric or muslin stitched on to net (*appliqué*), and embroidered with various devices, were made from designs for which special prizes were offered and awarded by Her Excellency the Marchioness of Londonderry. The lace was produced at the Bath and Shirley Schools, Carrickmacross, and has an appearance somewhat similar to Brussels *appliqué* lace. The design is by Miss Z. A. Inman, of Halstead, Essex.

No. 7.

LIMERICK LACE FLOUNCE.

The pattern of this Limerick (*tambour*) embroidery upon net was designed by Miss Emily Anderson, of the Crawford Municipal School of Art, Cork. The lace was made by workers under the supervision of Mrs. R. Vere O'Brien, of Limerick.

No. 8.

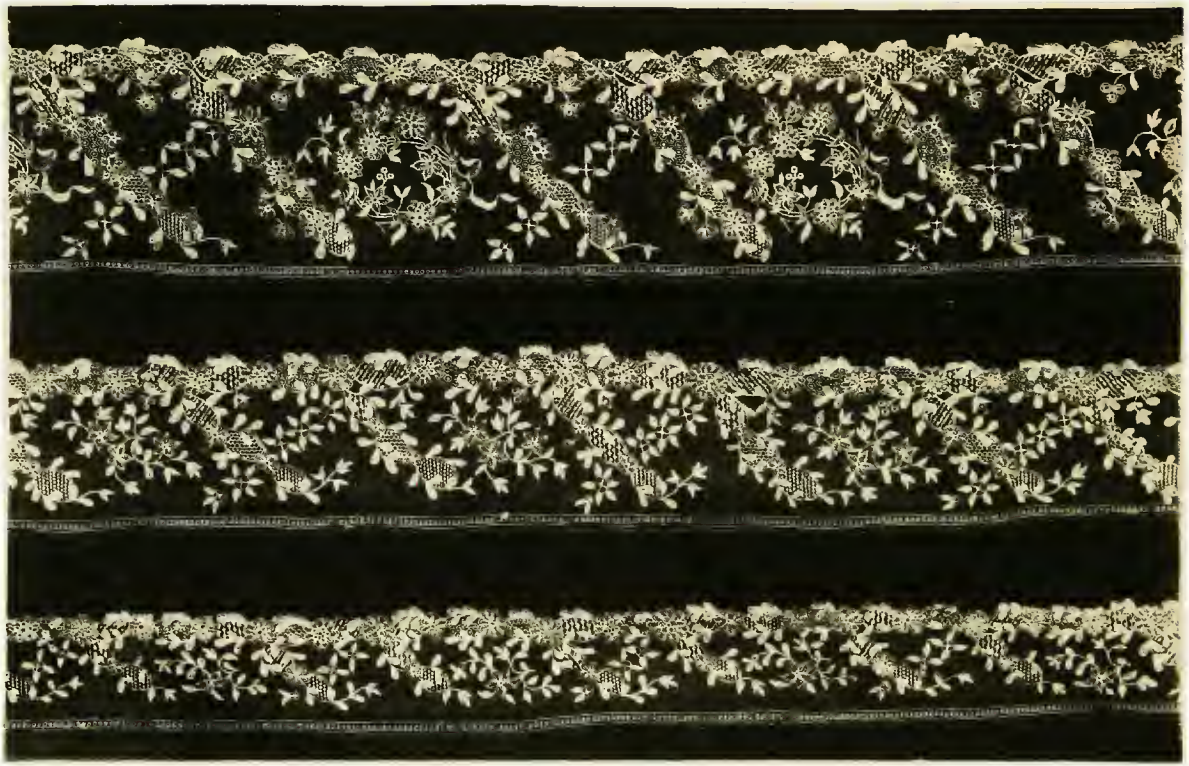
PARASOL COVER OF CUT LINEN.

Ornamental cut linen work was in vogue for all sorts of house linen, table-cloths, curtains, coverlets, etc., in Italy in the sixteenth century. But it was not until later times that it was adopted for other articles which might be suitably made in it. Mr. Michael Hayes, of Limerick and London, designed the pattern for the present specimen, which was worked at the Bath and Shirley Schools, Carrickmacross.

No. 9.

LIMERICK LACE BORDERS.

This set of borders of different widths was worked at a newly established lace-making class in connection with the St. Vincent's Convent of Charity, at Cork, from patterns designed by Miss Emily Anderson, of the Crawford Municipal School of Art, Cork. The scheme of the pattern is one which gives the lace-worker favourable opportunities of displaying her skill in the use of a variety of ornamental devices, which she introduces into the spaces left between the inter-twining sprays of flowers and leaves. Many of the eighteenth century laces of France and Belgium are notable for similar decorative *motifs*, especially the *Points d'Alençon.*



No. 10.

LIMERICK LACE FLOUNCE AND BORDER.

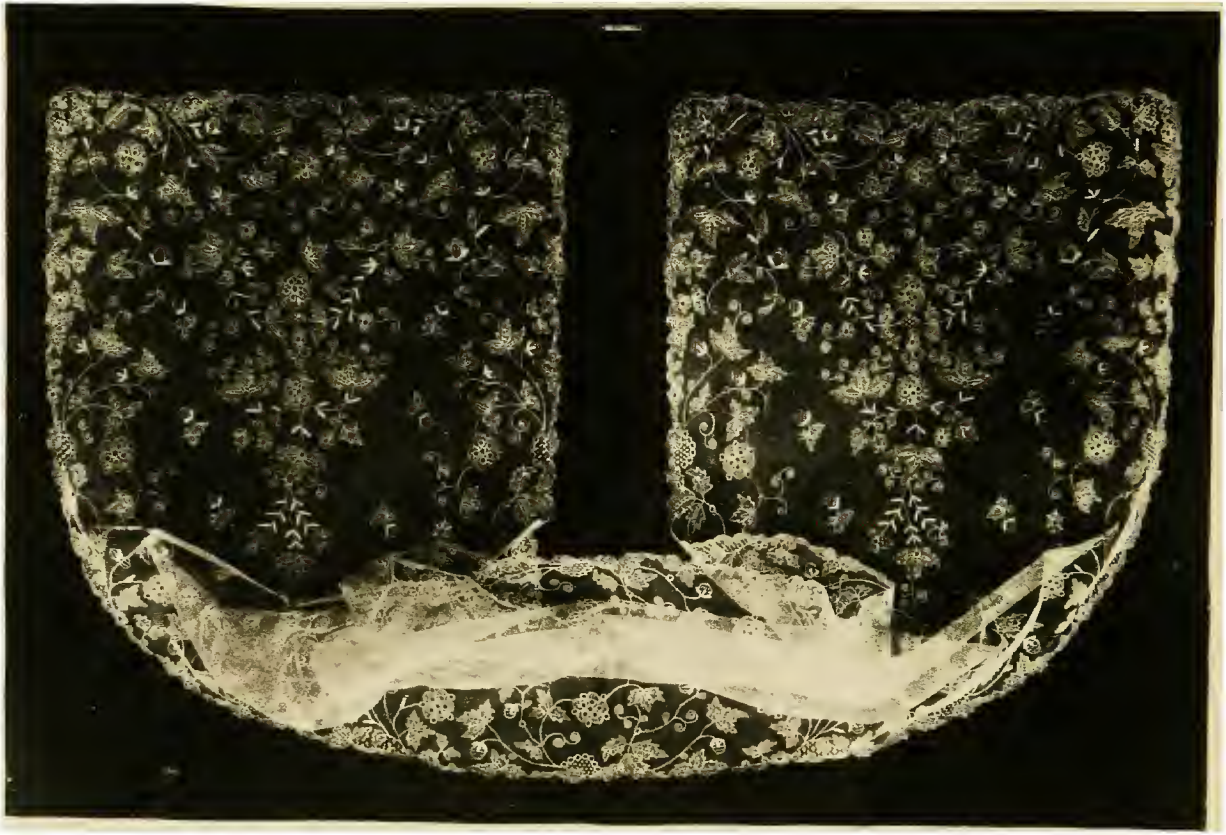
A lace-making centre—especially for all sorts of Limerick laces made with fine white threads either of flax or silk—has been quite recently organised by the Convent of Mercy, at Kinsale. Children are taught to do this work in the school attached to the convent; and wives of the fishermen of the town also make similar laces, under the supervision of the nuns of the convent. The design for the flounce and border was made by Miss Emily Anderson, of the Crawford Municipal School of Art, Cork, and was selected by Her Majesty The Queen in 1886.

No. 11.

SCARF OF LIMERICK RUN LACE.

The Limerick run lace is of lighter effect than the *tambour* work. It is a descendant of the running or darning on net or meshed grounds, which had so much success in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, when the meshes of the net were square in shape. At that time Italy and France produced great quantities of the work, known as *Punto à Maglia* and *Lassis*, from designs by F. Vinciolo, a pattern-maker who published many pattern books in both countries. In the latter he held the appointment of designer for Queen Catherine de Medicis.

The scarf here shown was designed by Mrs. R. Vere O'Brien, of Limerick, and worked by the lace-makers under her direction.



No. 12.

FLOUNCE AND BORDER OF LIMERICK *(TAMBOUR)* LACE.

The pattern for these was designed by a nun at the Convent of Poor Clares, Kenmare; and the lace was made by lace-makers under the direction of Mrs. R. Vere O'Brien, of Limerick.

NEW PATTERNS FOR IRISH LACE.

The endeavour to obtain new patterns for the use of Irish lace-makers was commenced in 1884, under the patronage of a Committee which since then has been added to. This Committee at present consists of the following:

Her Excellency the Marchioness of Londonderry.
The Duke of Devonshire, K.G.
The Duchess of St. Albans.
The Duchess of Wellington.
Lady Dorothy Nevill.
The Earl Spencer, K.G.
The Countess Spencer.
The Countess of Aberdeen.
The Earl Rosse.
The Viscount Monck.
The Lord Emly.
The Lord Carlingford, K.P.
The Lord Monteagle.
The Lady O'Hagan.
Sir Richard Wallace, Bart., K.C.B., M.P.
Sir George and Lady Colthurst.
The Dowager Lady Colthurst.
The Hon. Mrs. Pereira.
The Hon. Mrs. Albert Petre.
Mrs. Alfred Morrison.
The Hon. Mr. Justice O'Hagan.
The Hon. Mrs. O'Hagan.
The Drapers' Company.
The Skinners' Company.
Mrs. Adair.
J. T. Brunner, Esq., M.P.
Miss Keane.
Colonel and Mrs. Donnelly.
Mrs. Power Lalor.
Richard Bagwell, Esq.
Mrs. Alan Cole.
Vere Foster, Esq.
W. E. H. Lecky, Esq.
Mrs. Arthur Kavanagh.
E. Falconer Litton, Esq., Q.C.
Edward W. O'Brien, Esq.
Mrs. R. Vere O'Brien.
Mrs. Arthur Trench.
John E. Vernon, Esq.

The following notice of the action initiated by the Committee was issued in 1884:

PROPOSAL FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF THE DOMESTIC INDUSTRY OF LACE-MAKING IN IRELAND.

I. The making of lace in Ireland is a domestic industry, practised by some hundreds of peasants in their homes, by communities in Convents, by children in Industrial and other Schools, and by others. Great skill in the work has been developed since the earlier part of the present century when the industry was introduced to the country through the efforts of Philanthropists.

II. But the development of this skill has not been accompanied with the production and use of well-designed patterns. The merits of the Irish lace, through which a variable trade has been established, rest upon excellent workmanship applied to a few forms of somewhat stereotyped and poor design.

III. Consequently the fluctuating success of Irish lace-making is traceable to an evanescent and uncertain fancy of consumers for something "quaint and original," or to a sentimental desire for what is rather detrimentally called a "National production." The absence of a regulated supply of well-drawn and composed patterns seems to prevent the industry from becoming established upon either an artistic or a sound commercial basis.

IV. The means of organising a supply of such patterns exist in the Schools of Art of the United Kingdom. But an incentive is necessary to call those means into operation and to induce the lace-makers to feel that it is to their interest to adopt improved designs. Looking to the social advantages of developing this domestic industry in the midst of a considerable agricultural and fishing population similar in some important respects to those of France and Belgium, it is proposed to raise a fund for the distribution of new patterns amongst the scattered lace-workers of Ireland.

V. The steps proposed to be taken as soon as a fund, say of £500, be raised are as follows:

1. To offer money prizes for the production of designs for the various classes of work of which there are upwards of seven classes grouped under the name "Irish Lace;" Needlepoint Lace (from Youghal, Innishmacsaint, Cappoquin, Kenmare, Killarney); 2, Pillow Lace (from Parsonstown); 3, Drawn Linen Embroidery (Newtown Barry, Cappoquin); 4, Cut Linen Work (Carrickmacross); 5, Crochet (Co. Cork, Clones); 6, Braid and Cord Lace (Ardee); 7, Embroidery on Net (Limerick); 8, Cambric Embroidery (Donegal); all of which may be put to numerous uses in respect of dress; domestic use for curtains, table-cloths, etc.; and ecclesiastical use—albs, altar frontals, chalice veils, etc.

2. To select, with the advice of recognised authorities, a dozen or more suitable patterns.

3. To order, with a guarantee of payment to the workers, specimens of such patterns executed by picked lace-workers in various districts.

4. To exhibit these specimens in some public institution in London, Dublin, Belfast, Cork, and elsewhere.

5. To make photographs of these specimens for circulation to subscribers to the fund and to dealers in lace.

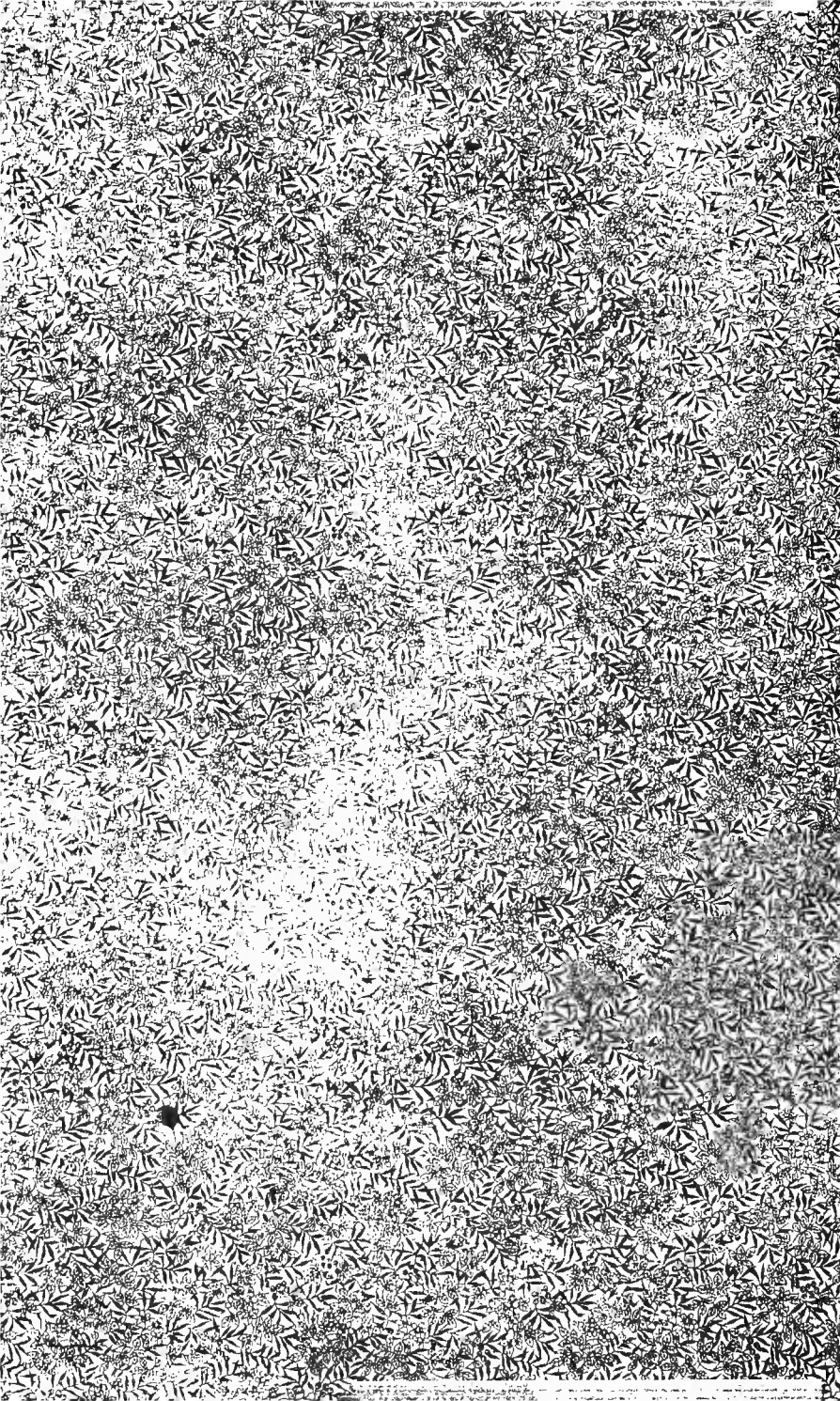
The subscriptions which have been received during the three years, from 1885 to 1888, are as follows:

	£	s.	d.
The Drapers' Company	50	0	0
„ „ (second subscription) ...	25	0	0
J. T. Brunner, Esq., M.P. (per the Countess of Aberdeen)	50	0	0
Sir Richard Wallace	25	0	0
Mrs. Alfred Morrison	25	0	0

	£	s.	d.
The Duke of Devonshire, K.G.	20	0	0
Edward Guinness, Esq.	20	0	0
The Skinners' Company	10	10	0
Messrs. Copestake, Hughes, and Crampton ...	10	10	0
Messrs. Marshall and Snelgrove	10	10	0
The Duchess of St. Albans	5	0	0
The Marchioness of Waterford	5	0	0
The Earl Rosse	5	0	0
Edward W. O'Brien, Esq.	5	0	0
Richard Bagwell, Esq.	5	0	0
Viscount Monck	5	0	0
The Lord Emly...	5	0	0
The Honourable Mr. Justice O'Hagan ...	5	0	0
John E. Vernon, Esq.	5	0	0
Baroness de Rothschild	5	0	0
John Hampden Fordham, Esq.	5	0	0
Mrs. Adair	5	0	0
Mrs. R. de la Poer	5	0	0
C. F. Redington, Esq.	3	0	0
E. Martyn, Esq.	3	0	0
Lord Monteagle	2	2	0
Mrs. and Mrs. James Bannatyne	2	2	0
Messrs. Haywards	2	2	0
Robert Vere O'Brien, Esq.	2	0	0
B. R.	2	0	0
Mrs. Arthur Kavanagh...	2	0	0
William Whiteley, Esq.	2	0	0
Dr. and Mrs. M'Donnell	2	0	0
„ „ „ (second subscription)	2	0	0
Edward Falconer Litton, Esq., Q.C.	2	0	0
W. E. H. Lecky, Esq.	2	0	0
„ „ „ (second subscription) ...	2	0	0
Mrs. Longfield	2	0	0
Lady Keane	2	0	0

	£	s.	d.
Mrs. Warde	2	0	0
James Brenan, Esq., R.H.A.	2	0	0
Lady Camilla Foster	1	1	0
R. E. Lyne, Esq.	1	1	0
Lady Musgrave	1	0	0
Lady Dorothy Nevill	1	0	0
Mrs. Perceval Maxwell...	1	0	0
Mrs. Power Lalor	1	0	0
Whitelock Lloyd, Esq.	1	0	0
Miss Keane (various small subscriptions) ...	0	10	0
Mrs. Colomb	0	10	0

Three yearly competitions for prizes for designs for lace have been held, and upwards of £225 has been spent in prizes (money awards) and in the purchase of experimental pieces. A further sum of £108 is being now spent in having special specimens of Irish lace made, of which some are to be seen in the foregoing illustrations.

The names of subscribers will be received by the Hon. Treasurer, Alan S. Cole, Esq., South Kensington Museum, to whom it is requested that all communications may be addressed.

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